

## Original Article

# Generational Differences in Attitudes towards Gender Roles and Violence Against Women

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### Abstract

**Background:** The Sustainable Development Goals include achieving gender equality and ending all forms of violence against women globally. In this respect, it is important to address the factors that affect gender roles and attitudes towards violence against women.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes toward gender roles and violence against women of individuals in the X, Y, and Z generations. For this study, Generation X refers to individuals born between 1965 and 1979, Generation Y to those born between 1980 and 1999, and Generation Z to those born after 2000.

**Methods:** This study is a descriptive-correlational design. This study sample consists of 443 participants who sought outpatient healthcare. Data was collected using a descriptive information form, "Gender Roles Attitude Scale", and "Violence Against Women Attitude" Scale. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 25.0. Shapiro-Wilk test was used to evaluate the suitability of the data for normal distribution. Descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis, Mann Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test and Spearman correlation analysis were performed. The results were evaluated at  $p < 0.05$  significance level.

**Results:** In this study, it was determined that participants from all generations had egalitarian gender attitudes and rejected violence against women. However, a statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women across generations ( $p < 0.001$ ). Participants in Generation X had a more traditional attitude than those in Generation Y and Z. It was also found that gender, income level, education level, marital status and experience of violence were associated with attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women.

**Conclusions:** In this study, it has been determined that attitudes toward gender roles and violence against women differ according to generations. It is recommended that the results of the study be taken into account in the initiatives to ensure gender equality and reduce violence against women.

**Keywords:** Gender, generation, violence against women,

### Introduction

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics, roles, and behaviors of individuals based on biologically determined sex. As a social structure, gender can vary across societies and over time. However, shaping social roles according to gender may

cause gender-based inequality and discrimination (Darmstad et al., 2019; Heise et al., 2019; United Nations, 2015). Gender inequality results in disproportionate disadvantages especially for women and girls in various aspects (Heymann et al., 2019; Marcus and Harper 2015). "Ensuring gender

equality and empowering all women and girls" is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). To accomplish this, numerous international and national action plans have been established, and significant steps have been taken towards achieving gender equality (Manandhar et al., 2018; United Nations, 2022).

Gender-based violence is a consequence of gender inequality and women and girls frequently experience violence. Studies have indicated a relationship between gender-based violence and traditional gender roles. (McCarthy et al., 2018; Reyes et al., 2016; Turan and Baki, 2020). According to a survey conducted in 44 countries, the most significant determinants of partner violence against women are social norms that promote male dominance over women, the physical abuse of women, and norms that view men as superior in terms of economic property (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015). Gender inequality and the attitudes towards gender roles that legitimize it reinforce violence against women at all ages and under all conditions (Saeed Ali et al., 2017; Semahegn et al., 2019).

To prevent gender-based violence, it is necessary to transform restrictive traditional gender role attitudes and develop an egalitarian attitude. To achieve this, it is essential to identify individuals' gender role attitudes and the determinants that shape these attitudes (McCarthy et al., 2018; Zapata-Calvente et al., 2019).

Social norms evolve with changing conditions, and therefore, people living in different periods may hold varying perceptions, priorities, expectations, and behaviors. These differences can be explained by the concept of generation (Scarborough et al., 2019). Although there is no accepted approach to the classification of generations, one of the used classifications is as follows. Those born between 1965-1979 are classified as Generation X, those born between 1980-1999 are classified as Generation Y, and those born after 2000 are classified as Generation Z (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015).

In this framework, it is predicted that gender norms and attitudes will differ between

generations (Kitterød and Nadim, 2020). The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes toward gender roles and violence against women of individuals in the X, Y, and Z generations. It is thought that determining the attitudes toward gender roles and violence against women will guide future research and practices.

## Background

Violence against women stems from gender-based inequality and traditional gender roles. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations, 1993). Violence is typically categorized as physical, psychological, economic, or sexual, and approximately one-third of women experience some form of violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2021). However, due to sociocultural barriers, women often refrain from discussing their experiences with violence. Consequently, the prevalence of violence against women is likely higher than reported (Palermo et al., 2014). Acceptance of violence as a norm is a significant risk factor for violence against women (Christaki et al., 2023; Muluneh et al., 2020). Therefore, in societies where violence against women is normalized and condoned, women are more likely to experience and rationalize this violence (Heise and Kotsadam, 2015; González & Rodríguez-Planas, 2020).

The change in attitudes towards gender roles over time continues to be a significant topic of research (Eagly et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2016). Studies suggest that attitudes are becoming more egalitarian, and traditionalism significantly increases with age for both genders (Oláh et al., 2018; Sweeting et al., 2014). Given these changing social dynamics, it is believed that gender roles and attitudes towards violence against women may vary between generations.

## Methodology

**Study Design and Sample:** This study is in a descriptive-correlational design. The population of the study consisted of patients

who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the research. The sample size was determined based on the number of independent variables (10), the alpha value (0.05), and the power level (0.90) (Cohen et al., 2013). Stratified sampling was employed according to generations. The aim was to recruit a total of 441 participants, with 147 individuals from each generation. Data collection was completed with a total of 443 participants. Inclusion criteria were being literate, aged 18 years or older, belonging to Generation X, Y and Z, and volunteering to participate in the research. In this study, Generation X is defined as those born between 1965 and 1979, Generation Y as those born between 1980 and 1999, and Generation Z as those born after 2000.

**Data Collection:** The data were collected by the researchers. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their informed consent was obtained. All patients who sought outpatient healthcare on the data collection days were informed about the study. Those who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate were included. Data collection continued until the required number of samples. The data of this study was collected face to face between January and March 2023. Each participant took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete the data collection tools.

The data collection instruments included a Personal Information Form, the "Gender Roles Attitude Scale", and the "Violence Against Women Attitude Scale".

**Personal Information Form:** This form consists of 10 questions that include sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, economic level, marital status, education level, and experiences related to violence.

**Gender Roles Attitude Scale:** Developed by Zeyneloğlu and Terzioğlu (2011), this five-point Likert-type scale comprises 38 questions. The scores on the scale range from 38 to 190. Higher scores indicate an individual's "egalitarian attitude" towards gender roles, while lower scores indicate a "traditional attitude." The mean score obtained from the scale is 95 and above, indicating that the sample has egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles; if the mean score is below 95, it indicates that the sample

has traditional attitudes towards gender roles. The Cronbach alpha value of the scale was 0.952.

**Violence Against Women Attitude Scale:** Kanbay et al. (2017) developed this five-point Likert-type scale, which consists of 30 questions. The lowest possible score on the scale is 30, while the highest score is 150. A higher score indicates a negative attitude towards violence against women (rejection of violence), whereas a lower score indicates a positive attitude towards violence against women (acceptance of violence). As to the scale's total score, while individuals who receive over 90 points are on the negative end in violence against women, those who receive below 90 points are on the positive end. The Cronbach alpha value of the scale was reported as 0.923 (Kanbay et al., 2017).

**Ethical Considerations:** Ethical approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee before starting data collection. Permission was also obtained from the healthcare institution where the research was conducted. Participants' personal information such as name, surname, identity number, and telephone number was not collected. The research team committed to using only the available data for scientific purposes. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

**Statistical analysis:** The data analysis for this study was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0. The data were summarized using numbers, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Chi-square analysis, Mann Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test and Spearman's rank correlation analysis were performed. The results were evaluated at a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

The study was conducted with 443 participants from the X, Y, and Z generations, as shown in Table 1. Of these participants, 56.5% from Generation X, 40.9% from Generation Y, and 46.3% from Generation Z were male. In terms of marital status, 70.7% of Generation X and 36.9% of Generation Y participants were married, while nearly all Generation Z participants (99.3%) were single. Generation X had the highest proportion of individuals with the lowest

education level (19%). The perceived economic status of the generations was similar ( $p>0.05$ ). The prevalence of self-reported any experience of violence was significantly higher in the Generation Y ( $p<0.001$ ). This study found no significant difference between generations in the experience of physical, economic, and sexual violence. However, a significant difference was observed in the experience of psychological violence. The participants from Generation Y and Generation Z experienced significantly more psychological violence compared to those from Generation X (Table 1). The experiences of violence were analyzed based on generational characteristics. A significant difference was found in the experience of violence across generations, according to their gender and marital status. Women in Generation Y and Z self-reported more instances of violence than men. Divorced participants from Generation X self-reported higher instances of violence (Table 2). In this study, it was determined that participants from all generations had egalitarian gender attitudes and rejected violence against women. However, a statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women across generations ( $p<0.001$ ). Participants in Generation X had a more traditional attitude than those in Generation Y and Z. Similarly, the difference in attitudes towards violence against women was caused by Generation X (Table 3). It was found that being male, being married, having a low economic status, being a primary school graduate, and not having experienced any violence were significantly associated with both gender role attitudes and attitudes towards violence against women (Table 3). In this study, the correlation between participants' attitudes towards violence against women and gender roles attitudes was evaluated. A strong significant correlation was found between attitudes in all generations. Notably, the highest correlation was found in the Z generation ( $r=0.794$ ) (Table 4).

## Discussion

This study found that attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women differ across generations. Generation X had more

traditional attitudes gender roles than other generations. Similarly, Generation X had the least positive attitudes towards violence against women. The results of a study conducted to examine the attitudes of three generations of women regarding gender roles are similar to our findings. While 91.5% of the youngest generation have egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles, this rate is 84.6% of the oldest generation (Ozturk et al., 2021). Similarly, another studies reported that participants from the younger generation had significantly more egalitarian attitudes than participants from the older generation (Manolov et al., 2023; Shukla, 2015). In studies examining the changes in gender stereotypes over time, it has been reported that there are changes in gender role behaviors and egalitarian attitudes towards women have increased (Eagly et al., 2020; Moya & Moya-Garófano, 2021).

This study suggests that gender and education level are significant factors in Generation X's more traditional gender role attitudes. Of the Generation X participants, 56.5% are male, and 19% are primary school graduates. These proportions are significantly higher than those of other generations. A number of studies have shown that men tend to be less supportive of gender equality than women and that societies with lower levels of education are less likely to adopt egalitarian social norms (Croft et al., 2015; Manolov et al., 2023; Pampel, 2011; Sudkamper et al., 2020; Thijs et al., 2019). Additionally, in this study, it was determined that participants in Generation X had less positive attitudes towards violence against women. Previous studies are similar to our findings. It was found that greater adoption of traditional gender roles can lead to less positive attitudes towards violence against women and an increase in gender-based violence (Rodelli et al., 2022; Singh and Aggarwal, 2020).

This study found that married participants have more traditional gender role attitudes and less negative attitudes towards violence against women. Additionally, in this study, married participants self-reported less violence compared to single and divorced participants.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic and violence-related characteristics of Generations X, Y and Z**

	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z	Total	p
<b>Gender</b>	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	<b>0.025</b>
Female	64(43.5)	88(59.1)	79(53.7)	231(52.1)	
Male	83(56.5)	61(40.9)	68(46.3)	212(47.9)	
<b>Perceived economic status</b>					
High	23 (15.6)	25(16.8)	20(13.6)	68(15.3)	0.903
Medium	97(66.0)	101(67.8)	100(68.0)	298(67.3)	
Low	27(18.4)	23(15.4)	27(18.4)	77(17.4)	
<b>Marital status</b>					
Single	29(19.7)	93(62.4)	146(99.3)	284(64.1)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Married	104(70.7)	55(36.9)	-	159(35.9)	
Divorced	14(9.5)	1(6.3)	1(6.3)		
<b>Education level</b>					
Primary	28(19.0)*	4(2.7)	4(2.7)	36(8.1)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
High school	49(33.3)	38(25.5)	100(68.0)*	287(42.2)	
University	70(47.6)	107(71.8) *	43(29.3)	220(49.7)	
<b>Experience of violence**</b>					
Yes	60(40.8)	91(61.1)*	89(60.5)	240(54.2)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
No	87(59.2)*	58(38.9)	58(39.5)	203(45.8)	
<b>Type of violence</b>					
Physical violence	30(20.4)	38(25.5)	35(23.8)	103(23.3)	0.573
Psychological violence	46(31.3)	80(53.7)*	80(54.4)*	206(46.5)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Sexual violence	8(5.4)	13(8.7)	8(5.4)	29(6.5)	0.419
Economic violence	25(17.0)	13(8.7)	25(17.0)	63(14.2)	0.062

\* Group(s) causing significant difference \*\*Experience of violence: any physical, psychological, sexual or economic violence

**Table 2: Factors associated with any experience of violence**

	Experience of violence						Total	
	Generation X		Generation Y		Generation Z		n (%)	p- value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	No n (%)		
<b>Gender</b>								
Female	31(51.7)	33(37.9)	60(65.9)*	28(48.3)	54(60.7)*	25(43.1)	231(52.1)	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>
Male	29(48.3)	54(62.1)	31(34.1)	30(51.7)*	35(39.3)	33(56.9)*	212(47.9)	
<b>Perceived economic status</b>								
High	19 (21.8)	4(6.7)	14 (15.4)	11 (19.0)	8(13.8)	12 (13.5)	68(15.3)	p=0.168
Medium	43 (71.7)	54 (62.1)	63 (69.2)	38 (65.5)	37 (63.8)	63 (70.8)	298(67.3)	
Low	13(21.7)	14 (16.1)	14 (15.4)	9 (15.5)	14 (15.7)	13 (22.4)	77(17.4)	
<b>Marital status</b>								
Single	14(23.3)	15(17.2)	61 (67.0)	32 (55.2)	88 (98.9)	58(100.0)	268(60.5)	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>
Married	36(60.0)	68(78.2)*	29 (31.9)	26 (44.8)	-	-	159(35.9)	
Divorced	10(16.7)*	4 (4.6)	1 (1.1)	-	1(1.1)	-	16(3.6)	
<b>Education level</b>								
Primary	13(21.7)	15(17.2)	1(1.1)	3(5.2)	2(2.2)	2(3.4)	36(8.1)	p=0.400
High school	20(33.3)	29(33.3)	22(24.2)	16(27.6)	58(65.2)	42(72.4)	187(42.2)	
University	27(45.0)	43(49.4)	68(74.7)	39(67.2)	29(32.6)	14(24.1)	220(49.7)	

\* Group(s) causing significant difference



**Table 3. Factors associated with the total scores of the Gender Roles Attitude Scale and Violence Against Women Attitude Scale**

Gender Roles Attitude Scale		Violence Against Women Attitude Scale
<b>Generation</b>	X±SD	X±SD
X	149.00±26.59	125.31±21.47
Y	161.64±22.29	132.95±17.63
Z	164.67±20.66	133.29±17.51
p-value	<b>p&lt;0.001</b> X-Y* X-Z*	<b>p=0.038</b> X-Y* X-Z*
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	166.41±21.22	138.21±13.49
Male	149.77±24.36	122.16±21.08
p-value	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>	<b>p&lt;0.001</b>
<b>Perceived economic status</b>		
High	162.22±24.14	130.02±21.27
Medium	159.22±23.31	132.08±18.10
Low	152.16±26.87	124.97±20.95
p-value	<b>p=0.029</b> Low-High*	<b>p=0.016</b> Low-Medium*
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	162.46±22.79	133.95±17.01
Married	151.28±25.12	124.42±21.48
Divorced	156.12±22.81	135.43±15.05
p-value	<b>p&lt;0.001</b> Single-Married*	<b>p&lt;0.001</b> Single-Married*
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary	135.41±25.85	115.86±19.34
High school	158.23±24.80	130.47±19.54
University	162.41±21.26	132.98±17.99
p-value	<b>p&lt;0.001</b> Primary- High school* Primary-University*	<b>p&lt;0.001</b> Primary- High school* Primary-University*
<b>Experience of violence</b>		
Yes	161.21±23.73	133.42±18.13
No	155.19±24.46	127.11±20.05
p-value	<b>p=0.005</b>	<b>p=0.005</b>
<b>Total</b>	158.45±24.22	130.53±19.27

\* Group(s) causing significant difference

**Table 4. Correlation of Gender Role Attitudes Scale and Violence against Women Attitude Scale**

	Violence against Women Attitude Scale
Gender Role Attitudes Scale	$r_s$
Generation X	.786*
Generation Y	.781*
Generation Z	.794*

\* $p < 0.001$ .  $r_s$ : Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

### Discussion cont.

The attitude characteristics of the generations can explain this. The majority of married participants are from Generation X. Given that individuals from this generation often adhere to more traditional gender roles, they are likely to accept violence. Because the compatibility of violent acts with traditional gender roles of a particular generation may also contribute to the normalization of violence (Bates et al., 2019).

economic status of the generations was similar ( $p > 0.05$ ). The prevalence of self-reported any experience of violence was significantly higher in the Generation Y ( $p < 0.001$ ). This study found no significant difference between generations in the experience of physical, economic, and sexual violence. However, a significant difference was observed in the experience of psychological violence. The participants from Generation Y and Generation Z experienced significantly more psychological violence compared to those from Generation X (Table 1).

The experiences of violence were analyzed based on generational characteristics. A significant difference was found in the experience of violence across generations, according to their gender and marital status. Women in Generation Y and Z self-reported more instances of violence than men. Divorced participants from Generation X self-reported higher instances of violence (Table 2).

In this study, it was determined that participants from all generations had egalitarian gender attitudes and rejected violence against women. However, a statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women across generations ( $p < 0.001$ ). Participants in Generation X had a more traditional attitude than those in Generation Y and Z. Similarly, the difference in attitudes towards violence against women was caused by Generation X (Table 3).

It was found that being male, being married, having a low economic status, being a primary school graduate, and not having experienced any violence were significantly associated with both gender role attitudes and attitudes towards violence against women (Table 3).

In this study, the correlation between participants' attitudes towards violence against women and gender roles attitudes was evaluated. A strong significant correlation was found between attitudes in all generations. Notably, the highest correlation was found in the Z generation ( $r = 0.794$ ) (Table 4).

In line with these results, it can be concluded that differences in attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among generations are attributed to education, socioeconomic status and cultural factors (Scarborough et al., 2019). Increasing egalitarian attitudes and behaviors across all generations is critical in achieving the goal of achieving gender equality.



Therefore, it is recommended that interventions be planned to promote more egalitarian gender norms.

**Conclusion:** All generations were found to have egalitarian gender roles attitudes and reject violence against women. However, Generation X had more traditional attitudes towards gender roles and less negative attitudes towards violence against women compared to other generations. There was no significant difference observed between Generations Y and Z. Additionally, characteristics such as being male, having a lower socioeconomic status, being a primary school graduate, and not having experienced violence were found to be associated with more traditional gender role attitudes and less negative views towards violence against women.

**Limitations:** There are some limitations of the this study. Within the scope of this research, stratified sampling was made according to generations, but not stratified according to gender. For this reason, the context of gender and generation could not be clearly distinguished in the attitude towards gender and violence against women. In addition, the research was conducted in a single center. Therefore, its generalizability is limited. Given the major limitations of the study the conclusions should be interpreted with caution.

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